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Redevelopment Board Minutes 08/27/07

Arlington Redevelopment Board
 Minutes of August 27, 2007

Members Present:

Christopher Loret
 Roland Chaput
 Edward Tsoi
 Andrew West
 Bruce Fitzsimmons

Also Present:

Kevin J. O'Brien
 Joey Glushko
 David Berry

Roland Chaput called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and began a discussion of the vision of Arlington's future. Staff was asked to incorporate the comments in the draft vision statement.

This discussion was followed by a discussion of some suggested proposals regarding the commercial areas of town. The discussion focused on the physical appearance of the business centers and Ed Tsoi and Andrew West agreed to meet before the next ARB meeting to make some suggestions for ways to improve commercial vitality.

The Board next took up the draft Open Space and Recreation Plan. Ann LeRoyer of the open Space Committee participated in the discussion. The Board made several suggestions and asked staff to draft a comment letter that reflected the comments. Ed Tsoi suggested that Town Meeting be asked for funds to acquire open space so that specific parcels could be pursued.

Kevin O'Brien explained the discussions that had occurred considering the materials management plan and read the letter received from our Licensed Site Professional, Jeff Nangle, indicating that the plan was acceptable. Ed Tsoi moved that the Board receive the letter from Jeff Nangle indicating, as required by Section 101(6) of the Land Disposition Agreement, that he approved the Materials Management Plan dated August 23, 2007, prepared by Blackstone Consulting, LLC for the Symmes site. Bruce Fitzsimmons seconded the motion and the Board voted 4 to 0 in favor with 1 abstention.

Shortly after 9:00 PM Roland Chaput recognized Jake Upton and Sandi Wolchanski from Symmes Redevelopment Associates (SRA) who proposed investing funds in the medical office building site in order to make it more marketable. The Board has to approve the actions because it still holds a mortgage on the site and because the funds invested in the site reduce the penalty SRA must pay if it fails to construct a medical office building on the site. The Board expressed concern that the costs for the four proposed actions were reasonable. SRA explained that the costs were estimates and that evidence of the actual expenditures would be made available to the Board. After some discussion, Ed Tsoi moved and Andrew West seconded the motion to approve SRA's proposal to abate and remediate hazardous materials in the nurses building (est. cost = \$115,000), demolish the nurses building (est. cost = \$160,000), grade landscape and install retaining walls as needed on the site (est. cost = \$130,000), and install utility stubs (est. cost = \$40,000), subject to the Board's confirmation by an independent consultant that the costs are reasonable and the work appropriate for the future development of the site should it be returned to the town. The Board voted 5 to 0 to approve the motion.

Next Roland Chaput asked Laura Wiener to explain the Symmes affordable housing agreement that is being sent to the Board of Selectmen so that they can approve the submittal of a Local Initiative Program application to include the units on the State's inventory of affordable homes. Chris Loret proposed that the pricing of the affordable condominium units should be at 70% of median as has been done on the two previous condominium projects approved by the ARB under the Town's inclusionary zoning bylaw. Other Board members thought that we couldn't go back on a deal that had been made a long time ago. Chris Loret then indicated that he would communicate his opinion to the Selectmen regarding the application.

Chris Loret then proposed removing the amendment to the marketing plan made by the Affordable Housing Task Force, which expanded the definition of "Town employees" to include employees of the Arlington Housing Authority. The purpose of this amendment was to provide Housing Authority employees the same preference for the affordable and middle income units that Town employees would receive. He reasoned that the Housing Authority employees were not really Town employees but employees of the State, and a preference for them was not included in the recommendations of the Symmes Advisory Committee. Chris Loret moved that the Housing Authority employees be deleted from the marketing plan. Bruce Fitzsimmons seconded the motion and the Board voted 5 to 0 to approve it.

Ed Tsoi then moved that it receive the regulatory agreements and marketing plan regarding the Symmes affordable housing as amended for transmittal to the selectmen. Andrew West seconded the motion and the Board voted 4 to 1 to approve the motion.

Next the Board discussed the leasing of the Parmenter and Crosby Schools buildings. David Berry reported on the appraisal of market rent that had been conducted and which indicated that our rents were low compared to the market. The Board discussed various means to increase the rents. The Board then shifted the discussion to the term of the leases. Chris Loret pointed out that the Town Meeting transcript indicated that in explaining their vote to extend the ARB's jurisdiction of the schools to 2011, the Selectmen noted that a three year extension was recommended by the School Committee in consultation with the tenant's, and therefore, it was reasonable to conclude that the Town Meeting had decided to release the properties for three years based on that recommendation and the expectation that the leases would be for an additional 3 years. The Board instructed staff to issue a request for a three year lease (beginning July 1, 2008) and to include an escalator in the rent each year to move closer to the market rate.

Kevin O'Brien showed the Board a proposal to change the antenna configuration for the Nextel antennas at 47 Mystic St. and at 215 Mass. Ave. The only visible difference in each location would be the addition of three antennae to the nine already in place. The Board indicated that the amendment was insignificant if the company repainted all twelve antennae to match the brick surface on which they are mounted.

Andrew West moved and Bruce Fitzsimmons seconded the motion to approve the minutes for the August 6, 2007 meeting.

The Board next acted on a request by the Arlington Center for the Arts to be open on Sunday for a special event on October 14. Chris Loret moved that the request be granted. Andrew West seconded the motion and the Board voted 5 to 0 to approve the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 10:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
 Kevin J. O'Brien